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LONG - PAW,

THE MYSTERIOUS HUNTER.

A BACKWOODS YARN.

By KIT CLYDE.

Author of "Wreckers and Smugglers," Etc., Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE STORY OF A MYSTERIOUS HUNTER.

NIGHT in the backwoods!

The straggling rays of the summer moon, glinting through the embowering trees, fall upon a little party of four persons.

The scene is further illumined by the cheery blaze of a camp-fire, around which are stretched the members of the party already mentioned.

The place is not far from the head waters of the White Earth River and in the very shadow of the Black Hills, located in Southern Dakota.

Let us glance at the party before us.

Two are boys, or young men we suppose they would prefer to be called, being eighteen years of age, and one possessing the daintiest little black mustache in the world.

The third member of the party is a man of about forty-five years of age, and by his appearance is a hunter and guide.

The fourth man is a half-breed Indian, who serves as assistant guide, interpreter, cook, provision-agent and general utility man.

The boys are warm chums, named respectively Carl Berger and Will Baxter; the guide is called Gabe Harris and the Indian is known only as Sam, his own unpronounceable appellation being too much for the boys to master.

Carl is of German parentage, though of American birth, and is fair, with blue eyes and thin, yellow hair, while Will Baxter, a regular out-and-out, true-blue Yankee boy from top to bottom, is dark, and boasts luxuriant locks and a mustache.

Both boys were sincerely attached to each other, and had been companions since childhood, having been born on the same day at the same time.

They lived in Chicago, and were going to San Francisco to engage in business, but had taken a rather round-about way to reach there.

The fact was, there was no particular hurry, and they decided to spend their vacation, having just graduated from the high school, in hunting, fishing and adventure, previous to their entering the world of business.

Carl was an orphan, his father having died a month or so before he was born, and his mother four or five years afterward, so that the poor lad was left to the tender care of relatives, who nevertheless took good care of him.

Will, too, strange to say, was also without parents, or if he had any they had never shown up as far as he could remember, and he had lived with his uncle since a child.

The respective guardians of the two boys saw no reason why they should not enjoy themselves in the woods during the summer, previous to going into business, and so the boys, having procured a guide, set out upon their way to San Francisco, having been already a month on the road when we are introduced to them.

Old Gabe needs no particular description, and neither does the Indian, so we will proceed with our story, having introduced our principal characters as far as possible.

"We will strike into the Black Hills to-morrow, shall we not, Gabe?" asks Will, of the old trapper, who is puffing away at a clay pipe, made as black as jet from constant smoking.

"Reckon we will, Master William. Shouldn't wonder if we met with Long-Paw."

"Long-Paw? What's that, an Indian or a grizzly bear?"

"Nuther."

"What then?"

"A hunter. Queer feller he is, too. Some say he's crazy, but I doubt it. Any rate, he knows enough ter make it hot fur the Injuns whenever he lights onter ther trails."

"Is he white?"

"Yaas, I reckon so, leastwise I guess he war once, though now he's brown as a nut. It's a strange history."

"Do you know it?" said Will, eagerly, while Carl looked the interest he felt.

"Waal, yaas, I know most on it, as it wur told ter me, but, o' course, I can't tell whether it's all true or not."

"Tell us it just as you heard it," said Will, excitedly.

"All right, my hearty, here goes."

Gabe first filled his pipe, however, before he began his yarn, but at last when everything was ready and the white clouds of smoke arose in the air, the old fellow started off as follows:

"They say that Long-Paw, called that on account o' the bigness of his hand, which is an awful size and no mistake, more like the paw of a wild beast than a man's hand, they say that he war born somewheres in the eastern part of the states, Maine, I think, and that he first settled here some twenty years ago, when he war a young man, and afore his trouble came upon him.

"He'd a brother, they said, that wanted to get his money away from him, and said he was crazy and locked him up in a lunatic asylum. He got away from that and came out here, and the Injuns killed his wife and all his children, they say.

"That turned him crazy if anything ever could, and he swore a terrible vengeance against the murderers.

"He went away into the woods and rarely comes out. His beard is long and shaggy, his skin is as dark as an Injun's, and his hand is a regular paw, large and long and covered with hair.

"When he gets hold of one of them red devils with that paw, he chokes 'em to death and they never know what happens to 'em; but to let folks know that he's been around, he just carves out an arrer on the fellow's breast.

"Ye kin never know where he's goin' ter turn up, for he travels all over the country about here, from one end to the other, never remaining long in one spot."

"Don't you know his other name?"

"No; and there ain't anybody knows it. Don't believe he ever had any. At any rate I never heard him called anything but Long-Paw."

"Is he friendly to the whites?"

"Yaas; but he don't have any more to say to 'em than he can help; never eats with 'em, and won't sleep in their camps; got a hovel somewhere in the woods what nobody knows anything about."

"I should like to see him very much," said Will.

"If you do, you can make sure that the Sioux are around then, for he always follers 'em up close."

"And they have never succeeded in catching him?"

"They may have caught him, but have never killed him. He's too smart for the pesky critters. But, I say, it's gettin' late and I'm sleepy. Wake me up, Sam, at midnight."

In a few moments they were all fast asleep except the Indian on guard, while Will dreamed of mysterious hunters, cruel Indians and wicked brothers nearly all night, as it seemed.

CHAPTER II.

THE WORK OF THE MYSTERIOUS HUNTER—THE NIGHT ATTACK—WILL BAXTER CAPTURED.

THE next morning when the boys awoke, they found old Gabe roasting a haunch of venison over the fire, and muttering to himself.

"Wonder if it'll happen so this time?" he said. "Durned funny if it don't. I never git to talkin' about that feller, but what he 'pears putty soon arterwards."

"What are you talking about, Gabe?" asked Carl.

"Nothin'."

"Where is Sam?" asked Will, getting up from the ground.

"Gone arter water. He'll be back in a—— Halloo!"

At that moment the Indian rushed into the camp in a state of great excitement.

"Ugh! big divil 'round; see him mark on Injun!" he said. "See him finger on Injun throat."

"The mischief you did!" said Gabe, jumping up. "Where?"

"In wood, little way off. Come see, Long-Paw been about, white devil kill um Injun spy, choke um, put arrow on um."

"Show us the place," said Will, excitedly, Carl saying nothing, but appearing as much interested as the others.

The Indian led the way, a few steps only beyond the edge of the camp, and the boys saw what had startled him.

Stretched across the fallen and partly-decayed trunk of an immense tree was the naked body of an Indian, face upwards.

His mouth was open, and his bulging, blood-shot eyes and protruding tongue showed only too clearly that he had been strangled.

Besides that, the imprint of four immense fingers and a thumb were plainly visible, even had other evidence been
dusky throat.

On his breast were three or four gashes with a knife, which formed a rude representation of an arrow.

"Long-Paw, sure enough," said Gabe, coming up. "I'll bet a cent that this feller war a spyin' on us an' the crazy hunter come along an' tickled his wind-pipe fur him, arterwards puttin' his mark on the cuss so's we'd know he'd been here."

"Do you suppose there are any more Indians about?" asked Will, eagerly.

"Dunno; mought, an' then again they moughtn't. We'll see 'em if they is, the pesky critters!"

"What are you going to do now?" asked Will.

"Eat my grub an' start out fur the hills."

"Sensible idea that," and in a few moments it was put into execution.

The party had been perhaps an hour on the road when Sam uttered a guttural ejaculation, and pointed to an object just ahead of them.

It was the dead body of an Indian, and, on inspection, proved to have been treated like the first.

"Um white devil kill 'em all!" grunted Sam; "leave none for Injun. Sioux get scared; run, ugh! No trouble paleface boy."

"I shouldn't mind seeing a live Indian," remarked Will.

"Ye kin do it putty quick, I fancy, then, fur I see their tracks all around," replied Gabe, with a grunt. "Keep yer shootin'-irons handy, but don't plug at the cusses unless they comes on ye in a heap. Better knife 'em! That makes less noise!"

The party kept on all day, meeting every now and then with the dreadful indication that Long-Paw was at work, but seeing no live Indians.

At nightfall they encamped on a little patch of rising ground, though Will desired to go to a valley just below them, where was a stream of water and several large trees.

After supper Gabe said that he was going to remain on watch for the night, as he did not like the looks of things, and that Sam could take the other half.

Despite their anxiety the boys fell asleep in a short time, and had perhaps been in that state two hours when they were hastily awakened.

"Get yer weepins ready!" whispered Gabe, "an' lie as flat as ye kin. The pesky critters is around, an' I s'pects there's a heap on 'em."

"Did you see them?"

"No; but I smell 'em an' hear 'em, drat their dirty skins. Are ye all ready?"

"Yes," answered both boys, in a breath, holding their rifles in their hands, and seeing that their revolvers were in readiness.

Suddenly a cracking sound was heard, and Will saw a tufted head rise up above the ground not ten feet away.

Without thinking, he took instant aim and fired, hitting the head full in the center.

There was a fiendish cry and a dusky form sprang into the air and fell lifeless on the sod.

"By durn! thet's a good shot," said Gabe, "but I'm afeared ye wur too sudden—look out! By gosh, here they come! Let 'em have it now, hot and heavy!"

With a yell as if all the fiends had been let loose, a score of dusky wretches dashed up the hill firing upon the camp.

The party remained flat on their stomachs and answered the volley with deadly effect, four or five of the redskins falling in the agonies of death.

They paused not, however, but swept on, approaching the place on all sides.

Carl, Will and Gabe kept up a constant fire during the short time there was, and every shot told.

Sam, the half-breed, had sprung to his feet in his excitement and rushed pell-mell into the advancing horde.

In another instant the whites sprang to their feet, and standing back to back in the center of their little camp, fought valiantly for life.

Surrounded upon all sides there seemed little chance of escape, and presently Will discovered that he had used up his last cartridge.

Clubbing his rifle he brained one brawny savage, but at the next moment the barrel of his weapon was grasped by a stalwart Indian, who pulled the lad away from his friends before he could loosen his grasp from the rifle.

He was instantly seized by two others and borne rapidly away between them, his arms pinioned to his side and a gag thrust into his mouth.

He thought the villains would run his legs off, and at last, after what seemed to be an age, he was utterly exhausted and fainted dead away.

When he came to his senses it was broad daylight, and he was lying on his back, bound and helpless in a little glade, surrounded by a dozen savages.

CHAPTER III.

A SINGULAR CHARACTER APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

SITTING under the shadow of a giant boulder in a wild pass of the Black Hills was a man of most singular appearance.

If he had stood erect he would have measured within two or three inches of seven feet, but a decided stoop which he had reduced his height to six feet, three or four inches.

He had been in the habit of stooping so long that he was round-shouldered, so much so that he seemed hump-backed, his head being thrust forward in an inquiring sort of way that was very comical.

His nose was long, sharp and thin, and his chin seemed to vie with it in all these particulars, particularly as a wiry beard of a fiery red stuck straight out at right angles to his face, and heightened the effect.

His eyes were small and deep-set, surmounted by shaggy brows of the same flaming hue as his hair.

He was almost entirely bald, but what hair he had would have served as a beacon in a dark night.

The man's face showed great shrewdness of character, albeit a little out of true balance, and a smile constantly lurked around his enormous mouth, that betokened a kind heart.

He was big boned, had enormous hands and feet, was knock-kneed, round-shouldered and awkward, but inside of his outrageously comical frame he had a heart as big as a bullock's, and could be as tender as a woman.

He was dressed in a pair of faded blue army trousers, buckskin leggings and moccasins; patched brown coat, from the sleeves and collar of which could be seen a white flannel shirt; wore a slouched hat with a very wide brim, and had a long rifle slung over his shoulder, besides a belt stuck full of revolvers, Bowie knives and tomahawks.

This man's name was Jehiel Splinter, called 'Hiel for short, and his occupation was general hunter, wanderer, and philosopher for the government, having once been an army scout, but long since mustered out.

"Chaw me, ef ever I did see sech a 'tarnal go as this yer is! What am I goin' to do? Let's see, what does Lord Byron advise under such circumstances? Aha, I have it: 'When in doubt, play trumps!' That's it, 'Hiel, my buck—that's it."

He arose from his position and looked toward the sun, now descending the western slope, accompanied by a mass of gold and purple clouds.

"Can't tell for the life which *one* o' them pesky bands toted her off, blessed ef I kin. Still—

"In the tempest of life,
When the wind and the gale
Are in battle and strife,
If thy courage should fail,
If thy eye should dim,
And thy spunk all depart—"

"What then? Why, bless your gizzard, 'Hiel, jest answer the poet in the words o' Julius Caesar:

"Never give up the ship."

Suddenly withdrawing his gaze from the sun, the singular being strode off down the mountain side toward a spot where he had seen a wreath of white smoke curling lazily upwards.

In a sort of sing-song tone, which could neither be called singing nor speaking, he continued:

"Oh, why does the white man follow my path,
Like the hound on the tiger's track?
Oh, why does——"

Then he suddenly broke off.

"Music hath charms," he continued, "but I'll *be* chaw-ed"—one could never tell when his marks of emphasis were coming—"ef it don't beat *me*. Go an' lose a clear trail like *that*. Gosh! it makes me think of what Deacon Watts says in his hymn-book;

"There is a tide in the affairs o' men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the current o' their lives
Is bound in shallers an' in miseries."

"That's me, right down to a dot. Softly, now, neighbor," he suddenly said to himself; "thar's the print of a Injun's hoof—three on 'em, by gosh, yes, an' more! By gravy! I *have* struck it, an' no mistake. Thar's the heel o' a boy's boot. They was draggin' him along, plain enough. Eh! what d'ye call this yer? A bit o' fringe from his huntin' shirt."

All this time the man had been making his way rapidly along the path, having reached a narrow stretch of woods, and, while he kept up a running fire of talk, was carefully examining the ground, bushes, trees and rocks, seeing distinct signs of the presence of human beings where an ordinary man would have seen nothing.

"This yer trail leads to *that* thar fire, sure as a b'ar kin foller the smell o' honey to a bee tree. As my old friend, Joe Miller, remarks:

"How doth the little busy bee
Delight to bark an' bite;
To gather honey all the day
For bears to eat at night."

"*That's* the second edition, but it's as true as arithmetic. Them Injuns is agoin' ter stay all night. They's got a white boy wi' 'em—tell that by the way he turns out his toes. Nobody but a heathen or a Injun toes in. Mebbe my gal is in the lot. Hope so; but seems ter me she'd 've made some sign."

Then he began singing softly to himself:

"Oh, run to the winder, Sister Ann—Sister Ann,
An' hang a white rag on the blind,
So that pretty blamed soon my dear old man
May see it, an' follow behind."

"That's all my own, aided by the poet Bluebeard. Tell ye what, ef I gets my cotton-pickers on one o' them red nigger's gullet, he'll *think* he's got the croup."

"Softly now the light of day
Fades upon my sight away,"

As Mr. Bacon says, in his 'Country Graveyard.' *Blow* me, if I ain't got a dead sure thing on them Injuns. They'd never look for *me* in the very bowels o' the mountain—not them.

"Oh, come to the mountain, my bold brigadier, an' I'll show ye suthin' ye didn't expect. I've traveled, I hev, an' ye don't often catch *me* wi' my eyes shut. I'm clear grit, no dirt, an' I assay a hund'ed dollars to the ton."

"I've roamed every land beneath the blue skies,
I've crossed all the oceans that ever was made;
My travels an' troubles has made me so wise,
That, try all your might, you'll not make me afraid."

"No, sir, not *many*. Ha-ha! the night shadders fall, as the poet lariat says. I kind o' reckon I've gone fur enough fur a while, an' I'll jest lay down here under this log an' close my eyes in sweet repose fur one hour an' twenty minutes by the moon, an' arter that:

"Go where glory waits thee,
Bright warrior of the skies;
An' if Injuns take thee,
Be sure to black their eyes."

"As Chaw-sir remonstrates to the Duke of Kentucky:

"Go to bed, my little stranger,
What the deuce care you for danger?"

An' that's just what I'm goin' ter do; but if them Sioux devils don't get 'Hail Columbia!' to-night, then I'm a nigger, an' my name's Mud!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS HUNTER RESCUES WILL FROM THE INDIANS.

DARKNESS rested over valley and plain, over forest and stream, and no sound broke the awful stillness.

Poor Will lay with his head propped up against a tree-trunk, while the forms of several Indians stretched about a camp-fire showed that he was still a prisoner.

On the opposite side of the little enclosure stood an Indian on guard, and the cautious way in which he gazed about him, changing his position from time to time, indicated that he had no intention of being surprised.

Will could not sleep, from thinking of his position and the probable fate in store for him, but let his gaze wander from the vigilant sentinel to the sleeping Indians.

He thought constantly of his companions, and wondered whether they were free and would come to his aid, or if they, too, had been captured and were as powerless as he.

After awhile he looked again toward the man on guard, and thought that he was acting very strangely.

The man seemed to be listening very intently, but moved neither hand nor foot, standing as if glued to the spot.

Suddenly Will saw a huge hand and arm stretched out from behind a tree and seize the man by the throat.

There was nothing else, simply a hand and arm, apparently unconnected with a body, which, of course, must be behind, but was so carefully hidden as to be invisible.

By the light of the fire, Will could see that the hand was of enormous dimensions and covered with long black hair, like the paw of an animal, the arm being similarly ornamented.

A sudden thought flashed through his brain.

The hand and arm belonged to the mysterious hunter, so feared by the Indians.

Long-Paw was at hand.

Doubtless he had come to deliver the young man, and Will could scarcely breathe from excitement.

In a moment, the hand had tightened upon the Indian's throat, the fingers completely encircling it.

The man was unable to utter a sound, and Will saw him gradually grow limp and lifeless, and in a few moments he sank silently to the ground.

Then the monster hand was withdrawn, presently appearing again clasping a knife.

Several rapid passes were made across the man's breast, and Will doubted not that the fatal arrow would be found there in the morning by the now unconscious Indians.

Then the hand disappeared as suddenly as it came, and Will was wondering whether the man really meant to release him or not, when he felt his cords cut, and in the next minute was lifted from the ground bodily and placed upon his feet outside the circle of sleeping Indians.

Will now saw a powerfully built man standing beside him, and was about to express his thanks, when the

stranger, intimating by signs that he should remain perfectly still and not stir from the spot until he returned, stepped within the circle once more.

Will saw him reach forward with that long arm, and by its tense position, knew that those powerful fingers had closed over some savage throat.

In a minute or so it was withdrawn, and the knife was clasped firmly and thrust forward.

In less time than it takes to tell it, the man had changed his position twice, and two more savages bore the avenging mark of the mysterious Long-Paw.

Suddenly there was a cry of alarm, and the few remaining savages sprang to their feet.

One of them had awakened just as the deathly grasp had encircled his throat, and had barely time to scream aloud in his terror.

In an instant the fatal steel was plunged to the hilt in his heart, and he expired without a groan.

The alarm had been given, however, and Long-Paw quickly retreated.

Catching Will up in one arm, as though he had been but an infant, he rushed rapidly through the tangled underbrush, the Indians in full chase.

One glance at their murdered comrades sufficed to tell them of the presence of Long-Paw, and with fierce yells they started in pursuit of him.

The man made such rapid progress, however, that it was useless to attempt to follow him in the darkness, and the redskins soon abandoned a chase that could only prove fruitless.

After a few minutes, the hunter, evidently convinced that the savages were no longer in pursuit, set Will upon his feet, and taking one of the boy's hands in his own gigantic one, led the way at a rapid pace.

In the course of, say ten minutes, Will felt himself caught up, and the hunter climbed right up the face of a rocky ledge, pausing at the height of about fifteen feet.

Then he advanced through a narrow opening, carrying the boy with him, and presently slid down an incline to quite a considerable distance, bringing up at last at the bottom.

Will was then left alone for a moment, while his strange conductor produced a light, disclosing to the boy's astonished gaze a spacious cavern, furnished with comfort, not to say elegance.

There were closets set into the walls, couches of tanned skins, a large center table covered with the skins of red foxes, two or three comfortable chairs, a large fireplace, on either side of which hung all sorts of utensils, and over in one corner, on a heavy bar of oak, was draped a rabbit-skin curtain, arranged in such a manner as to show that there was another apartment beyond.

Will then turned his attention to the occupant of this singular place of abode.

He was not the giant he had imagined him to be, standing about six feet only; but his arms were very long and muscular, and his hands, particularly his right, was as big as two ordinary ones, being covered on the back with thick black hair, while the palms were as tough and wiry as parchment.

The man wore a full black beard, not very long, and his black hair clustered in his neck, not reaching his shoulders.

He had a kindly expression, and in a moment he said, in a voice of singular softness:

"Welcome to the home of Long-Paw!"

CHAPTER V.

WILL AND THE HUNTER—CARL'S RESCUE—GABE'S SURPRISE.

"So you are the mysterious hunter, Long-Paw?" said Will, seating himself upon a pile of skins.

"Yes."

"I have heard of you."

"From the Indians?"

"Yes, and from whites."

"Did Gabe Harris tell you of me?"

"He did. Do you know him?"

"I know who he is. I tried to prevent the attack upon you, but was delayed."

"Have you seen the rest of our party?"

"No, though I am upon their trail."

"Was Carl captured?"

"I think so."

During this conversation Will had a chance to note more particularly the appearance of the man before him, and to observe his peculiarities of dress and manner more carefully than at first.

He was arrayed, backwoods fashion, in a complete suit of buckskin, with a coonskin cap surmounting his head, and carried a rifle across his shoulder, while a long and remarkably keen knife was stuck in his belt.

He did not talk with that peculiar drawl habitual with most frontiersmen, but with an accent and enunciation that proved him to be a man of education and good breeding.

His eyes were piercing, but had none of that wild look which is supposed to indicate insanity; in fact, the whole bearing of the man would indicate that his mind was particularly well-balanced.

Will desired to know more of this singular being, and presently, in a careless manner, as if it was a matter of perfect indifference to him, he said:

"Your name is a singular one, though I can see its appropriateness. You were not always called by it?"

"No."

"You have lived among whites?"

"Yes."

"Lately?"

"No."

"You have no wish to return to civilization?"

"Yes."

"Soon?"

"When my mission is accomplished."

"People may have forgotten you."

"It matters not."

"Or they may think you dead."

"I desire that they should."

"Does anyone know your real name in these parts?"

"No," he added, slowly, and with emphasis, "and I do not intend that they shall."

"I would like to know it."

The man gazed earnestly at the speaker, fixing his eyes intently upon him, saying, at last:

"It is not idle curiosity that impels you, I know that, and I like your face. Some day I will reveal myself to you. Not now, though. You are weary and need rest. Lie down here, and in the morning I will awake you."

Thus admonished Will stretched himself upon the couch, and was soon in a profound slumber.

While he sleeps let us repair to a more distant part of the forest.

A party of Indians are encamped about a little fire, and two of them are on guard, or supposed to be, although their nodding heads betoken that they are remiss in their duty.

A white boy is standing against a tree, strong cords binding his arms and legs and preventing his escape.

The prisoner is Carl Berger, Will Baxter's chum and traveling companion.

He is in the same predicament from which Will has just been rescued.

He is asleep, being worn out by his long tramp, his Indian captors having hurried him along unmercifully during the day.

Suddenly he awakes as a gleaming knife is sunk to the guard in a savage breast.

The other sentinel is served in the same manner, and then a shadowy form creeps toward him, and severs the thongs that bind him.

The reaction from a constrained position to freedom is so great that he nearly sinks to the ground, and would, did not the man seize him by the arm and bear him rapidly away.

"Who are you?" murmured Carl.

"Sh, don't say nothin' now, wait till we get out o' the way o' these pesky varmints."

He hurried Carl away at a quick pace, and in about half an hour pushed open a door of what seemed to be a rude cabin, and entered, followed by Carl.

"Who are you?" asked the boy.

"Never mind; I'm a friend, and that's all you want to know for the present. The Injuns knows me well enough."

"You are Long-Paw, the mysterious hunter."

"Waal, I never said I wasn't, did I."

"Why don't you light up?"

"Kase I don't choose, that's why. Lay down and take a snooze."

"Tell me, are my friends safe?"

"Waal, I reckon they is; now go to sleep."

"Where are they?"

"I'll tell ye that in the mornin', but I ain't goin' to say nothin' more; so you mought ez waal take a snooze."

The man then retired into an inner room whence Carl could hear him muttering at intervals, and, finally, seeing that nothing more was to be learned that night, Carl lay down upon the floor and fell asleep.

Upon this same night old Gabe Harris the scout was making his way cautiously through the wood, never stirring a leaf or snapping a twig, and keeping his hand constantly on the trigger of his rifle.

"I'll be stumped ef them red niggers gets away them boyees," he muttered. "H'm, I kin smell the smoke o' ther camp fire now, though I'll 'low I didn't think it wur so near."

He advanced cautiously, and after a few moments came upon a rocky ledge at the base of which lay a dozen Indians sound asleep, in their midst a figure clothed in buckskin and having a white face.

"Thar's one on 'em," whispers Gabe, and stepping as lightly as a cat over the sleeping forms, he cuts the bonds of the captive, and as he wakes up, cautions him to be silent.

He lifts the form in his arms and is stepping lightly back, when his foot strikes against one of the savages.

The man awakes with a yell and Gabe darts away carrying the insensible form of the captive on his shoulder, and firing shot after shot at the red fiends.

At last when out of danger he lays the still senseless form on the sward, and tears open its shirt to admit the air.

"Jerusalem!" he mutters, in surprise. "It's a gal!"

CHAPTER VI.

DICK BRAND AND HIS GANG—THE TRAIN ATTACKED.

IN a tumble-down sort of shanty built against a bluff, and connecting with a small cave dug out from the rocks, by the light of a couple of blazing pine knots, sat a dozen desperate-looking men.

They were outlaws, every one of them—renegades, horse-thieves, murderers, road agents and general cutthroats.

They were all fully armed, and looked capable of shooting a man without the slightest compunctions.

They all sat on rough pine benches around a rickety table on which stood a jug, from which they helped themselves at frequent intervals.

There was nothing to drink from except the jug itself, and consequently they were obliged to resort to the primitive but perfectly fair way of lifting the jug by the handle

with one hand, swinging it around and letting it rest on the crooked elbow, while the nozzle was applied to the mouth.

The jug circulated freely, and at last became considerably lighter in weight, the heads of the party observing the same quality, although from the quantity of rum which has gone into them, one would suppose they would increase in weight.

The leader of this gang of ruffians is a low-browed, crime-stained wretch, by the name of Dick Brand, his principal coadjutor being one Hiram Look, a notorious road agent and horsethief.

"Fill up the jug, Bet," said Dick, after drinking the last drop; and a wretched old hag, who had sat in the remotest corner of the hut all this time, hobbled forward, took the jug, retired with it into the cave, presently returning with it full, and smacking her thin lips, still wet with the vile stuff.

"You say the train passed the foot of the hills at dark, did you, Dan?" asked Dick.

"Yes, and bound this way."

"They will rest for the night?"

"Certain. I'll bet a quart o' rum we'll find 'em now in one o' the hollers."

"Then suppose we go fur 'em."

"That's hearty. There's lots o' good stuff, money and horses an' nice pretty gals there, an' all fur the askin'."

"We'll take 'em without askin'," remarks Hiram. "Who ever heard tell o' our askin' fur anythin'? Will ye go arter 'em, Dick?"

"Course; come along."

The villains sauntered out into the night and followed Dick along the rocky pass in silence, while the howl of a mountain wolf seemed to give warning of their approach.

This band of desperadoes was noted for its lawless deeds, and there was not one that did not merit the gallows.

Meanwhile the men of the train, all unconscious of their peril, slept tranquilly, leaving two or three on guard.

These were sitting around the fire smoking and spinning yarns, when suddenly with a yell that would have done credit to an Indian, the whole party came down upon the camp, firing a volley.

The sentinels were shot dead and instantly plundered, while the wretches attacked the helpless women and children, killing the old and feeble, braining the babies, and committing crimes which cannot be named.

The attack was so sudden that before the sleeping men could tell what had happened the tents were on fire, the horses stampeded, the young boys and girls carried off, and more than half their number dead.

They rallied quickly and fired upon the retreating demons, but a derisive yell was all the answer.

One man of middle age was almost overcome with grief.

His boy, a manly lad of fourteen, and his sister, a year or so older, had been carried away, his wife killed by the inhuman wretches, his horses run off, and himself reduced to beggary.

Joseph Drayton had made considerable money in the east, and had determined to emigrate west and join a brother who was getting rich by sheep-raising.

Now he was penniless, and worse than that, deprived of wife and children, for whom he knew a terrible fate was in store.

He dared not think to what a horrible, shameful treatment his poor Annie would be subjected, nor what his brave Jack might suffer in trying to defend her; he could only deplore his hard fate and try to console those who had been as unfortunate as himself, and devise plans for the future.

"I recognized some of the party," said one old man, "for I've seen 'em in the east. Dan Johnson and Phil Drowne I know were in the gang."

"And Dick Brand," said another, the scout of the party, who, fortunately, had not been killed. "Them 'ere fellers

is wuss'n Injins—they're reg'lar devils. I knows 'em well, an' I'd like ter git a crack at Dick once."

Nothing could be done until morning, when it was decided to push on and summon assistance, as the gang of ruffians was a large one, those engaged in the attack being only a small portion, but the worst portion, withal.

The robbers retreated to their den, bearing their prisoners, and these were thrown indiscriminately together in the inner cavern, the brutes occupying the remainder of the night in noisy, drunken revelry.

Jack and Annie Drayton were by themselves in one corner, and when all was quiet, Jack crept closer to his sister's side and whispered:

"Annie dear, I've got a plan."

"What is it, Jack?"

"I am afraid that these scoundrels will ill-treat you in the morning. I am going to give you my suit of buckskin to put on, and you must give me your dress and other things."

"What for?"

"You will be safer if they think you are a boy. You can tuck your hair up under my cap. I am not afraid of their hurting me, and I have an idea that they will turn all the boys loose to shift for themselves in the morning. I heard one of them say that boys were only a nuisance."

"I daren't go out alone."

"You must. You can make your way to the camp, and I will follow as soon as they find out who I am."

The poor girl said nothing, but in a few moments, when Jack threw her his clothes in the darkness, she removed her own and put on his.

In the morning, as Jack had supposed, the poor girl was thrust out in company with two or three boys, to make their way as best they might, unarmed and unprotected.

Toward noon they were fallen upon by a party of Indians, who soon divided, each gang taking one of the prisoners.

At night the poor girl was secured between two of the savages and fell asleep from sheer weariness, her dreams being troubled and her sleep feverish.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD GABE ASTONISHED—JACK'S ESCAPE—A RUMOR.

"LORD 'a massy," muttered old Gabe. "Dang me ef I didn't think it were one o' them boyees, an' arter all it's a gal. Dontee git frightened, missy," he continued, as the poor thing opened her eyes. "Ise not goin' ter hurt yer, blowed if I am. My name's Gabe Harris, an' I'm squar', I am."

"Where am I?" said the rescued one, sitting up.

"Wull—wull. If I hedn't knowed ye was a gal afore, I'd 'a knowed it now, fur nobody but a reg'lar female says: 'Where am I?' when anythin' happens."

"You haven't told me yet," answered the young girl, with a laugh.

"Why, bless yer heart, ye're here; right here wi' me, old Gabe Harris. How'd the pesky critters come to git hold on ye, anyhow?"

"You are a friend?"

"Ye kin jest bet yer boots I is. I war lookin' fur a lad what was captured, an' I thought you was him, seein' that rig out. What's yer name, little gal?"

"Annie Drayton."

"Any relation ter old Joe?"

"He's my father."

"Wull—wull, I'd never've thunked it. How did ye happen to be togged out in this fash'in?"

Annie told him of Jack's ruse, and of the attack by the ruffians.

"Wull, I never did! That brother o' you're 's a artist,

he is. He'll make his mark, I tell yer. But I say, d'ye think ye cud stan' a leetle more walkin' ter night?"

"I think so."

"Kase there's a frien' o' mine which has a hut not fur from yer, an' I thunk it'll be safer fur us to git in thar, 'stid o' stayin' out in the woods all night. Ye don't mind a leetle tramp?"

"No."

"All right, then, we'll go fur it."

Old Gabe thereupon set off on his journey, taking Annie's hand to prevent her falling, saying 'but little, as he knew not if the Indians might be about.

While he is on his way, let us return to Jack.

The villains did not discover his identity until noon, at which time Dick attempted to embrace the supposed girl.

Jack struck the scoundrel a blow in the mouth which drew blood, and in a voice, utterly unfeminine, advised the brute to keep his distance.

Jack's secret was at once discovered, and the villains were furious at the trick which had been played upon them.

The dress was torn from the lad's back, but in his underclothes and shoes he made a rush for the door, seized a pistol from Hiram's belt, and sending a shower of bullets among the crowd, dashed out and made his escape.

He tried to follow the direction of the train, but he soon got lost in the woods, and wandered on aimlessly until dark.

Then he suddenly fell in with a creature of singular lo-ness.

This was a white girl, dressed in a fanciful costume made of tanned deerskin, and trimmed with beads, wearing moccasins on her feet, a jaunty cap with a feather in it, on her head, and a neat little rifle slung across her shoulders.

"You are not an Indian?" said Jack, advancing.

"No, I am called the White Lily. My name is Lilly, and I live in the mountains."

"My name is Jack Drayton, and I am looking for my friends. We were attacked by Dick Brand, last night."

"Dick Brand? He is a renegade, and a villain. I think I can bring you to your friends, or one of them—a young man rescued from the Indians."

"Do you know his name?"

"No; but you must come and see him."

When Will Baxter awoke in the morning he found Long-Paw getting breakfast.

He arose and washed himself, and after giving thanks for his deliverance sat down at the table upon which the hunter had placed some smoking viands.

At that moment the hangings he had noticed were pushed aside, and a young girl curiously dressed, entered the cavern.

"This is my companion in my solitude," said Long-Paw.

"The Lily of the woods."

"Does she live with you?"

"Yes."

"She is your daughter?" asked Will, in surprise.

"No; she has no other friends in the world. Her whole family was slain by the accursed redskins. Bitterly have I repaid their lives; there is sorrow in many a lodge because of Long-Paw. My mission is not yet ended. The villain Brand still lives, my boy is not found, my pitiless brother is not punished."

Then, as if aware that he had told too much, the singular being relapsed into silence, and never uttered a word the rest of the day.

Will remained in the cavern all the time, having little to do, but soon after dark Lilly returned with a boy she had found in the woods.

At first, Will thought it was Carl, and running to him clasped him in his arms, but when he saw his mistake they both laughed.

"I'm pleased that somebody is glad to see me," said

Jack. "I thought you might be Harry or George or Tom, my friends. You haven't seen them?"

"I have seen no one. My chum, Carl Berger, was carried off by the Indians, and I am afraid I will never see him again."

"Wait," said Long-Paw, entering at that moment, having been absent for several hours.

"What do you mean?"

"Wait and you will see."

Nothing more was said, and the whole party sat down to supper, the two boys chatting as gaily as if they had known each other all their lives.

Soon after the meal was finished, Long-Paw arose and left the cavern.

The boys and Lilly were talking together earnestly when Will heard a cry.

Looking around he saw two boys, one of whom rushed upon him and nearly devoured him.

It was Carl.

The other seemed as delighted to see Jack, and Will concluded that it was one of his boyish companions.

His surprise at seeing Carl was hardly over when old Gabe Harris approached with Long-Paw.

"Wull—wull," said the old fellow. "This yer's what I calls a happy meetin'. Glad ter see yer enj'yn' yerselves. That's right. So this is whar yer lives, is it, Long-Paw? Wull, I'll be cussed if it ain't tidy. Gimme suthin' to eat, for I'm hungry as a b'ar."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE CAVE—MYSTERIOUS EVENTS.

'HIEL SPLINTER, after taking Carl to his hut, turned in and did not appear until the next morning.

Then he awoke the boy by his singing:

"The moon is beamin' o'er the lake,
Come sail in my light canoe—oo-oo,
Sweet sounds of music we'll awake,
As we sail o'er the waters blue—oo-oo!"

"As Daniel Webster wisely remarks to Davy Jones:

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' I didn't find the gal arter all, them confounded pesky critters must 've done it fust. That boy's a genius, though, for he must 've knowed I was comin'. Don't see how I missed the trail o' them black-hearted cusses, blast 'em. Wait till I get my paw on 'em an' they'll think the old Nick's to pay:

"Old Yankee Doodle rode to town,
On a yaller pony——"

Halloo, the boy's waked up, has he? Who's that knockin' on the door? 'Tain't mornin' yet."

He went to the door, the first grey streaks of dawn just appearing, and was greeted with:

"Halloo, ye old poetry book! changed yer lodgin's, hain't ye? Went to t'other place, didn't find ye an' so I come here. Got a comrade, a lady."

"What, you, Gabe Harris! What are ye doin' in these yer parts?"

"'Tis years since we hev met,
An' we may not meet ag'in,
I hev struggled to fureget,"

but I'll be doggoned if I kin. Give us your bread hook. As Shake says, old Bill Shake, you know:

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead
What never to his friend has said,"

I'm blamed glad ter see yer. This is a gal is it? By darn, Gabe, it's the very one I were lookin' fur. Ole Joe Drayton's gal. Bloody Dick—I hate him like p'izen an'll kill

him some day—he war goin' fur the gal I knowed, an' I lost the trail, darn my *big fist*."

"Well, 'Hiel, she got away arter all, an' Dick is swearin' mad, they say. Was you on Dick's track?"

"'Course. Ain't I allus? I'll throttle him some day an' put a mark on him. I knowed the gal was took, an' set out fur ter find her an' I run across another feller; come in—come in—"

"'Stan' not upon the order of yer comin'
But come at onct,"

as Johnny Milton says in his poem of 'Hamlet and the Ghost.' Chaw *me ef* I ain't glad ter see *yer*. Come in; this young feller here goes by the name o' Carl, he's a Dutchman, but—

"'The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon,
Where gottest thou that goose look?'
as Sir Isaac Newton once remarked to John Smith," he continued, suddenly breaking into quotations.

The cause of this was that Gabe was staring at Carl with all his eyes, the latter returning the stare.

"Well, I'll be cussed," said Gabe, "ef you hain't found one o' the chaps I war lookin' for! Glad to see you, Carl; wher's yer chum?"

"I don't know."

"Where is he, old seven-by-nine?" asked Gabe of the giant.

"'Time and the hour will show. Verily, the times air out o' j'int,' as Coleridge has it."

"So's your brain, old goat-beard! Where hev ye put him?"

"Verily, I will tell thee anon; the day is not yet."

"Sail on, silver moon, o'er the dark blue sea,
Bid the storm-king stay his hand,
An' bring my Willy back to me,
To his own dear native land."

Have patience yet a little, Master Gabriel; sit down and eat," for all this time, as he rambled on, he had been getting breakfast; "and when the night star is shining I will conduct ye to him. What does Herodotus *say*? Observe:

"'Twinkle—twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a gimcrack in the sky."

"When the blazin' sun is sot,
When the day stops gittin' hot,
Then you h'ist yer little light—
Twinkle—twinkle all the night."

"'Hiel Splinter, you've gone clean crazy—wuss nor I even seed ye afore. Ef it waren't fur yer long p—"

"'Sh!" said the man; "none of that. Tell you what, Gabe, I've got business. I'm just a-layin' for a feller that Sam Baxter hired to kill his brother. I've got him down fine. Then there's a gal—"

"Baxter?" said Carl, suddenly. "Sam Baxter? That's Will's uncle; do you know anything about him?"

"No, nothin'," said the strange man, and sitting at the table he began eating voraciously.

In a few moments he sprang to his feet.

"Wait till I come back!" he said, and then dashed out of the hut.

He did not return until near dark, and then he hurried them away along the mountain passes, until just at night-fall he halted before a precipitous ledge of rock, and said:

"Wait!"

Then he sprang up by means of hanging vines, and disappeared.

The surprised travelers waited for about ten minutes, when suddenly a form shot down the cliff and stood before them.

It was not the eccentric giant, but a man still more mysterious, to wit: Long-Paw, the hunter.

"You are welcome," he said. "Follow me."

He led the way up the cliff, Gabe assisting Annie, and presently they all stood in the cave, and then occurred the reunion already described.

Jack Drayton received his clothes from Annie, the latter being provided for by Lily, and then they all sat down and enjoyed a hearty supper.

Long-Paw did not seem to like the society of whites, and he soon withdrew into some inner cavern, and did not emerge again that night.

The various members of the party recounted their experiences, and then Carl said:

"I think, Will, that your preserver and mine are the same person—that Splinter and Long-Paw are one and the same."

"Maybe so. I saw him this morning early, and then he went away for all day. Your man went away and came back, and then disappeared in this cave, and emerged as Long-Paw."

"They must be the same," said Jack, "though the man has disguises, of course."

"Waal, I guess you're about right," said Gabe; "but in the ch'racter of Long-Paw I've never seed much o' the cuss. It's allus been as 'Hiel Splinter. Will Baxter, is your uncle's name Sam?"

"Yes."

"Then this feller what the Injuns is afeard on is aware o' suthin that interests you. He says yer dad was hired to be murdered by yer uncle."

"Impossible!" said Will.

"'Tis a fact!" said a voice which seemed to come from the roof. "He is doomed."

Looking up, they saw the hairy hand of the hunter protruding from some crevice in the rock high above their heads, and grasping a long, glittering knife.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE MARCH—MORE MYSTERIES.

IN the morning, the party, upon awakening, found food on the table, and a scrap of paper on which were written these words:

"The man Splinter will act as guide. I have gone to finish my mission. Do not follow."

"LONG-PAW."

Will did not think much about the matter, but Gabe was very much excited, and declared that they ought to have spoken to the mysterious man, and asked for an explanation of his strange words the night before.

While they were at breakfast, Lilly entered.

Walking up to Carl, she said, impressively:

"You had a sister once?"

"Yes; but she and my parents were killed by Indians."

"Not so; she was spared and was rescued by Long-Paw. The hunter has told me that I am Margherita Berger, called also the White Lily. You are my brother."

"Can this be possible?" murmured Carl.

"Upon my word, I can see a strong resemblance," said Will. "Can you not, also, Jack?"

"Indeed I can; I noticed it before, but now that you speak of it, I see it more plainly than before."

"Pray Heaven it may be so," said Carl. "Tell me, do you remember your father?"

"I remember a tall, fair-haired man with long moustache and silky beard who used to hold me in his arms, and when I would pull his beard, he would laugh, and say: 'Ach Gott, Gretchen, der must nicht.'"

"'Tis he—'tis he," said Carl, excitedly. "He always called her Gretchen, which is the German for Margherita. Heaven be praised, I have found you at last."

The long-separated brother and sister were clasped in a

long and loving embrace, and not an eye was not moistened with tears.

"Waal, I declar', ef this ain't funny," said Gabe, wiping his eyes. "Sounds just like a story book. Shouldn't wonder ef I was found to be a poor lone orphan myself. Makes me feel jest as if I war, durned ef it don't."

This produced a laugh, and suddenly a voice was heard singing:

"Through the wood—through the wood, foller and find me,

S'arch every holler and dingle an' dell,
Wherever I go I leave no track behind me,
So he that would foller must s'arch fur me well."

"Ye're jist about right thar, as Davy Crockett says to the king o' Holland. Verily, are ye ready to start?"

They all looked up and saw the eccentric Splinter standing at the entrance of the cave.

"Ho—ho, my comrades," he said, in his quaint tones, "make haste to depart, for the day waxes hot. In the immortal words of Lord Chesterfield, when giving advice to his son:

"Onct more unto the breach.
There's nuthin' like spunk in time o' war,
Therefore, good friends, I say, upon 'em,
Pile up ther ditches with ther dead,
Stan' to yer posts like brave men,
An' hang the 'tarnal critters high,
You bet, higher'n Heaven!"

which I mean fur to say, dropping poetry, that we mought meet some pesky Injuns, an' we've got ter lick 'em clean outter ther slippers, so pack up yer duds an' git."

"Have you seen Long-Paw?" asked Will, earnestly.

"Now ye're shoutin'! I are seen him an' he says fur ter pull up stakes an' git. Bum-by, in the futur', ye may see him ag'in, but ef ye stay aroun' yer any longer, ye'll git blowed to Kingdom Come!"

"What do you mean?"

"That ther's a powder magazine in t'other cave, an' the fuse is allit an' will connect in jest ten minits an' twenty seconds by the sun, an' then, away goes the hull durned business, an' verily the place thereof shall never know him more; old copy-book, ahem!"

The party lost no time in getting away from the place, and in ten minutes were well upon their way.

Suddenly a booming sound was heard, and looking back, the party saw, through a gap in the trees, a heavy cloud of white smoke, which was instantly followed by a sulphurous odor.

"Why has he destroyed his house?" said Will.

"Bekase he has left it fur ever and a day," answered 'Hiel. "Verily the time is come when all things what ye don't un'erstan' shall be made cl'ar. Ef Sir Thomas Moore truly says:

"There is more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio, than you or I has any idea of; consequently, it's a durned sight better ter stan' what troubles we has here,' meanin', as I take it, this mundane spear of our'n, 'than ter git mad an' try it somewheres else.' Don't it strike you that way, old sixpenny?"

"You're a wonderful man, 'Hiel," said Will, laughing. "Where did you pick up so much information?"

"I kin tell ye in two words, and them two words is these: school teachin'!"

"Did you ever teach school?"

"You are got it now, young man, an no dodgin'. I tort the young idea how to shoot, by means o' the spellin' book and the birch rod, particularly the birch, 'way off into the state o' Maine."

"Maine?" thought Will. "Gabe said Long-Paw came from Maine. The two must be one person."

Then addressing the strange fellow, he continued:

"Did you know Long-Paw in Maine?"

"As Sir Horace Walpole remarks:

"I had a brother onct, a precious boy,
He war the apple o' my eye;
I never knowed what fun was
When he warn't near, an' erstwhile,
I never liked to git licked ef he
Wasn't a standin' by."

"That's blank verse, an' deuced blank it are, too; which reminds me that what I meant ter say was, that Paul Bax—Long-Paw, excuse me, war the chap as had a brother, an' I knowed him fur a mean, sneakin' cuss, an' when him an' me emigrated, I says:

"That 'ere Sam Baxter means mischief, an' if he does, there'll be some one in his ha'r an' that'll be 'Hiel Splinter or I'm out of my reckonin'."

Before Will could express the thoughts that seemed ready to choke him before the words could come, Gabe suddenly uttered a shrill yell.

He was in advance of the party, and running up to him they beheld an Indian, choked to death and bearing the fatal arrow on his breast, the blood yet warm.

"Good Heaven!" muttered Will. "Does this strange being possess a double life?"

CHAPTER X.

LONG-PAW'S VENGEANCE—THREE LUCKLESS BOYS.

THE outlaw, Dick Brand, and three or four of his desperate companions, were riding along the mountain passes, the same road as that traversed by our friends, and on the same morning.

The night before their hut had been attacked by Indians, and burned to the ground, their prisoners set free, and they themselves forced to seek safety in flight.

This was strange, because Dick had always been on good terms with the savages, and had betrayed many a party of whites into their hands.

He could not account for it, out there was no time for that, and so here he was, seeking a new home, and cursing the treachery of the Sioux, thinking never a word of the many base betrayals to which he had been a party.

He had a flask of whiskey in his belt, and as he rode on he took frequent potations, the others following his example, as they were similarly provided.

"It's a hard shake, cuss me if it isn't!" muttered Dick, at length. "Got to start out afresh; take a new grip. Consarn those Injuns, they never went back on me afore. Burn me if I can make it out!"

"I reckon they thought Long-Paw war wi' us, Dick," said Hiram Look; "'cause I heard 'em shoutin' out ter kill him if nobody else."

"Faith they did kill somebody else!" swore Dick. "Dan and Bob and Tom and a dozen others are gone. I'll bet a plug o' terbacker that the condemned hunter hisself made the brutes think he war there, an' that's what made 'em so fierce."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Hiram.

"Cuss him—him an' me has got an old score ter settle," growled Dick, "an' the sooner it's done the better."

"You are right!" said a voice.

At that instant a mounted figure appeared in the pass before them.

There was no mistaking that form.

It was Long-Paw, the mysterious hunter.

He had a rifle to his shoulder and his aim was upon Dick.

"We will settle the claim now, Dick," said the hunter. "Get yourself ready, for I shall fire in ten seconds."

Dick whipped out his revolver on the instant, and let drive at the hunter.

Then there came a puff of white smoke, and a single report. There was a cry of agony, Dick threw up his hands, and fell from the saddle—dead.

"Now, Hiram Look, it's your turn."

The man turned to flee, but the fatal bullet, striking him in the back of the head, ended his wicked career.

"Now, Ralph Sturgis, you were one of the band, and it's your turn."

The man fell upon his knees and begged for mercy.

The hunter was pitiless. The rifle arose to his shoulder once more, the sharp report rang out upon the air, and the wretch dropped dead.

There was but one man left, and he expecting the same fate, threw himself from his horse, and screamed for quarter.

"Be quiet!" said Long-Paw, sternly. "I don't want your life. These men were murderers, and worse than that. They dragged my wife and babes from their beds, for hire, and murdered them! God in Heaven! 'twas a sight to make the angels weep! The inhuman dogs, that was not all they did! My blood runs cold when I think of it. Upon them and the Indians who helped them I have wreaked a terrible vengeance. Just now I met a chief—his hand it was that killed my youngest, and I strangled him!"

"For God's sake don't hurt me!" whined the villain.

"Get up!" commanded Long-Paw, in contemptuous tones. "You are a murderer, I know, but you had no part in the deed that I avenge. Go! If you are found within a hundred miles of this place by to-morrow noon, I will shoot you on sight. Go!"

The man needed no second warning, and mounting his horse, he fled incontinently.

"So, the villains are all dead," muttered the man of mystery. "All but he who inspired them to the vile deed. He lives yet, but his time is coming. Now to see my boy, the last of all. Thank God that the villain spared him, but even that shall not save him from my vengeance."

An hour afterward our party came upon the bodies of the dead outlaws, and wondered much at the sight.

'Hiel said nothing, merely giving a grunt, and the party passed on.

In the afternoon they heard a sound of firearms, and they hastened with all possible speed—not being mounted—to learn what it might mean.

Before they discover, let us go back once more.

Three white boys, stripped almost naked, and tied, face upward, to the backs of three fierce steeds, were being led along the mountain.

The hot sun poured down upon their unprotected bodies and scorched their tender skin, the cruel cords cut into their white flesh, and the clotted blood upon their limbs showed where thorns had scratched them, or where the sharp knives and arrows of the red devils had pierced.

The lads were the friends of Jack Drayton, the different parties having come together once more for the sake of protection against the terrible Long-Paw, who was said to be abroad.

The poor boys were strapped to the backs of the wild steeds, and the savages were about to set them loose for the sport of seeing their sufferings.

In vain the poor lads begged to be killed at once, that their sufferings might end then and there; the fiends only laughed and struck them in the faces with their fists.

Harry Morton, who had lost both parents in the attack upon the camp, and whom Jack liked best of all, turned to the savages and said:

"If ever I hoped for anything, I hope the lightning will strike you fiends dead, and that the wolves will pick your bones."

"And that not one man, or anybody belonging to him, will escape," added George Graham, another of the boys.

Tom Norton, the youngest of the lot, said nothing, but breathed a fervent prayer for deliverance.

The savages had reached a wild spot in the mountains, where dizzy precipices yawned on every hand, and were about to drive the horses, with their helpless burdens,

down the pass, when a shot was heard, and the chief savage fell dead.

In an instant Long-Paw himself was upon them!

CHAPTER XI.

THE SAVAGES ROUTED—REUNIONS AND SEPARATIONS.

"YIELD, villains, yield!" yelled the hunter, shooting down another savage.

The rest closed in upon him, and it seemed as if he would be killed, when suddenly a ringing cry was heard, and a dozen whites burst upon the redskins, and began an indiscriminate slaughter, giving no mercy and asking none.

The firing was heavy and incessant, and was that heard by the boys and old Gabe.

The latter soon reached the spot, and seeing how matters stood, immediately took a hand.

The savages, seeing further reinforcements, and not knowing how many more there might be, endeavored to escape.

They were surrounded, and those who were not killed outright, were hurled down the cliffs to be food for vultures.

Some were not killed by the fall, though they were too much disabled to escape, and there they hung, 'twixt earth and sky, to die a lingering death.

One had been caught by the breech cloth on the branch of a tree that hung over the precipice, many feet below, and there he was, unable to get away, and fearing to fall.

He had been nearly disemboweled by the thick branches through which he had fallen, and his condition was indeed pitiful.

He would probably live four or five hours, suffering all the torments of the lost, unless the limb should chance to break, or his garment give way, neither of which seemed likely.

One of the whites wanted to kill him at once, but Long-Paw said sternly that the red imp must suffer, and so he was left in his agony.

Not one of the entire party of Indians was spared, every man being killed at once, or hurled down the abyss, and in a short time the whites were alone.

The three boys were rescued from their perilous strait, but poor Tom was found to have been killed by a chance bullet.

The luckless boy had indeed been delivered from his enemies, delivered from all earthly cares and vexations, delivered from pain and suffering to find rest in Heaven.

Jack was delighted to meet not only his old chums, Harry and George, but to find his father, also, whom he had thought dead.

The other two boys were restored to their friends, and a scene of rejoicing, such as is seldom witnessed, took place.

Upon seeing both Long-Paw and 'Hiel Splinter at the same time, old Gabe was forced to acknowledge that they were separate persons, and not one individual, as he had stoutly maintained.

Will's mind was also set at rest upon this point, but there was another which still caused him anxiety.

That was to learn what relation Long-Paw sustained to his father.

When the fight was over, and the march was once more resumed, he looked for the man, but saw no signs of either him or the eccentric Splinter.

He and Carl concluded that it would be best for them to continue with the main party until all danger from attack by the Indians should have passed, and the more so because Carl had taken a great fancy to Jack's sister, and wanted to remain with her as long as possible.

The young lady herself had become greatly attached to

Carl, and could not bear to think of separation, and so Carl remained.

Will was equally fond of Carl's sister—the White Lily, as she was still called—and the five boys were all sworn friends in a few minutes, and rode in a body, the horses of the Indians having been captured and appropriated by the emigrants.

Old Gabe guided the party, and did it well, being well acquainted with the country.

At the end of a week they were well beyond the mountains, and still nothing had been seen of the two strangely-assorted hunters.

Early one morning Gabe told Will and Carl that their route would now have to be changed if they desired to go to San Francisco.

As he had been engaged by them, he considered it his duty to continue with them; and he expressed this to the emigrants, who were sorry to leave him, and they tried to persuade the boys to go with them.

Much as Will and Carl would have liked to do this they felt that they ought to follow out their original plan, particularly as situations were open to them in the city as soon as they should arrive.

Suddenly, when the matter was being discussed, Long-Paw appeared as if fallen from the clouds.

"I will take the boys to their destination," he said; "my way lies thither."

"Then I'll go with the rest," said Gabe, "provided as how the boys will let me. If that half-breed of a Sam had shown up he could pilot 'em, but I guess he's been scalped long since by his angry brethren, cuss 'em!"

"You may go, Gabe," said Will. "We shall get along now all right."

"You will not forget me?" said Carl, to Annie Drayton, as they were about to part company.

"No, indeed," said Jack; "neither will I, nor the boys, will we?"

"No," said George and Harry.

"Tell you what, Will," said Harry, earnestly, and with tears in his eyes, "these are my friends, but my poor father and mother are dead, and I believe I will go with you and try my luck in the city. I'm a city boy, anyhow, having been raised in Boston, and I think I will go with you, though I shall be sorry to lose Jack."

"I will be glad to have you, old fellow," answered Will, "and so will Carl, I know."

"Go with them, Hal, if you like," spoke up Jack. "I think myself you will like that better."

"Then I will. God bless you, Jack, and you, too, George, I may see you again after all."

"Perhaps so," answered George. "I don't feel altogether right, though; those brutes of savages gave me a pretty hard rub between 'em, and I am afraid I shall not get over it. At any rate, God bless you!"

The poor fellow had been feverish for several days, and he certainly looked unable to bear much more hardship.

The very next day after the parting he died in Jack Drayton's arms, and was laid to rest in the wilderness by the side of a murmuring stream, and under the shade of a giant cottonwood.

The three boys and Lily, with Long-Paw for their guide, were at that time well upon their way, and many stirring scenes were before them.

CHAPTER XII.

REVELATIONS.

Two nights after the division of the party, as the boys lay asleep under a rude shelter erected by the hunter, Will was awakened by Long-Paw, who led him to a rising knoll apart from the camp.

"Listen, my boy," said the hunter, "I have a revelation to make. Your father lives."

"I believe so," answered the boy. "Since coming out here I have been positive of it."

"You have always lived with your uncle?"

"As long as I can remember."

"Did he treat you well?"

"Not particularly so. I think he was rather glad to get rid of me, though he gave me more money than I asked for."

"Did he ever speak of m—— of your father?"

"Never, but others told me that he had been dead many years, and that my uncle had taken me to live with him, out of pity."

"No—no, it was not pity, it was remorse," answered the man. "Yet that will not suffice. I must have vengeance!"

"You are my father?" said Will, taking the man's hand in his own.

"Listen to a tale of woe," said the hunter.

"Years ago there were two brothers called Paul and Samuel Baxter, Paul being the oldest. The other was a villain and had been disinherited by his father."

"Sam determined to get possession of the money, and therefore had his brother adjudged insane and thrown into a private asylum."

"My God! they well nigh made him insane by the horrible treatment he received. He was there for five years, in which time Sam had removed from Maine where he had lived, to the west."

"At last Paul escaped, but his poor wife had died and no one knew him. He was no more insane than you are, my lad, not a bit, and he resolved to have vengeance."

"He went to the far west, married again and had several children. The villanous brother heard of this and hired a band of outlaws to murder Paul and his family, and say it was the work of Indians."

"In Paul's absence the villains burned the house and murdered every soul, including a friend of his, a German who had come west to seek his fortune, leaving a son in the east."

"All but one, a girl of the German's, were killed; she was taken by the savages and brought up under the name of the White Lily."

"When Paul returned he discovered what had been done, and learned the names of the perpetrators from the German, who was still barely alive. Then he resolved to have vengeance."

"With relentless hand he pursued the Indians and outlaws until, one by one, all had perished. More than once the Indians took him and condemned him to die, but he always escaped."

"He rescued the poor girl from her captors, and brought her up as his own, teaching her all that he knew himself, and earning her everlasting love and gratitude."

"At last, one day, he met his own son in the wilderness, and rescued him from the savages. The face and form were those of his son, and though he had not seen them for years, he was not deceived."

"Paul would not make himself known until he discovered for a certainty that the boy loved him, and revered his memory."

"Indeed—indeed, I do!" said Will, falling upon his knees, and bursting into a flood of glad tears. "I never believed my father dead. I have seen him in my dreams often, and not a night has passed but I have prayed that I might meet him."

"I am Paul Baxter, the wronged, the avenger!" said the hunter. "I have lived but for this, to clasp my son to my heart, and bid him love me with his whole soul."

"I do—I do," cried Will, in rapture. "Thank Heaven! I have found you at last."

"This is the story of Long-Paw, the hunter," said the man in conclusion, "of Paul Baxter, the victim of a brother's cruelty. But one thing remains to be done."

"And that is —"

"To take the life of the villain, and complete my work of vengeance," said the man, fiercely, his eyes fairly burning. "I tell thee, boy, such wrongs as mine are not to be lightly punished. None but the most dreadful vengeance can suffice. With my own hands will I tear out the heart of this monster of perfidy, and cast it into his lying face. A thousand curses —"

"Father—father, in mercy's name let the villain escape!" screamed Will, in terror. "For the love of Heaven, do not stain your hands —"

"Do not stay me, boy," said the man, fiercely. "'Sh, your comrades are awaking. Go back to them, and resume your rest."

Harry and Carl were sitting up when Will returned, and they asked him what had happened.

"Nothing to alarm us," he said. "I will tell you in the morning."

The excited lad lay down, but it was hours before he could compose himself to sleep, so busy was his brain with the revelations that had just been made.

In the morning he told Carl what he had heard, and how the mysterious hunter had taken his sister from the Indians.

Carl was as grateful as Will himself, and wanted to thank the man, but his friend advised him to wait a day or so.

The march was continued all that day, and at night the party encamped upon the banks of the Bear river not more than fifty miles from Ogden city.

In the middle of the night, Will was suddenly awakened by his father, who was bending over him.

"A large party of Indians is approaching, my lads," he said, for Harry and Carl were awake. "We must take to our horses and cross the river."

In silence the horses were led forth, and when all had mounted, Baxter went ahead and entered the current.

The horses swam abreast, and had gone about half way across when a series of fiendish yells arose from the bank they had just left.

In a moment the scene was bright with a dozen blazing torches, and a shower of arrows flew toward the boys.

They lay flat in their saddles, and the arrows flew harmlessly over their heads.

The riders urged their horses to greater speed, and the bank grew nearer every instant.

Suddenly Baxter uttered a cry of surprise.

"The villains are pulling after us in canoes!" he muttered. "I shall have to teach them a lesson!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIGHT ON THE RIVER.

"PUSH ahead," continued Long-Paw. "I will rejoin you in a moment."

Giving the reins of his horse to Lilly, who feared nothing, he slipped off into the water, and disappeared from sight.

The canoes, five in number, were now in the stream and were rapidly approaching.

The occupants of the foremost suddenly gave vent to fierce yells, as a keen knife was seen to penetrate the bottom of their frail craft, and rip it from end to end.

The water poured in upon the instant, and the Indians were obliged to jump out and take to swimming.

Long-Paw dove again, and coming up behind the second canoe, reached his long arm out of the water and strangled one of the savages right before the eyes of his fellows.

The arm disappeared for an instant, and then appeared again, with the knife grasped by the fingers of that tremendous hand whose power the red rascals knew only too well.

Right and left it struck, and two more redskins followed the first.

Then the arm disappeared, and the canoe was served as the first had been.

The savages shouted out a hasty warning as they leaped into the water, but in an instant the dreaded form of the hunter arose in front of the third canoe.

A sweep of that terrible arm and a savage lies in his gore.

A dive beneath the surface and the canoe is upset.

But now the sound of pistol shots is heard.

The Indians in the water have attacked the boys.

Harry and Will shoot the first two and Carl and Lily take the next, but the demons are swarming about them in a moment.

The bank is still some feet away and is sloping, making it not a very easy task to ascend.

"Kill the red imps!" yells Will, and he and Harry pour the contents of their revolvers into the faces of their blood-thirsty enemies.

Long-Paw swims swiftly to the rescue of the boys, and the reeking knife finds plenty of work to do, until, at last, the Indians, knowing with whom they have to deal, and fearing to lose all their number, beat a hasty retreat.

The horses ascend the bank and Long-Paw heads the way through the trackless forest, never pausing until the sun was high in the heavens.

Over mountain and valley, through rivers and brakes the journey is continued, the party narrowly escaping being captured by Indians more than once, and at last they are clear of such enemies and have no one to fear but lawless whites, of whom there are plenty to be found in the woods and mountains.

At Carson City they procured suitable outfits, their clothes at that time, although of stout material, being considerably the worse for wear.

Dressed in a suit of durable cloth, a slouched felt hat on his head, his beard trimmed and his enormous hands encased in buckskin gloves, Long-Paw looked an entirely different person, and no one knew him, though many had heard of him.

Lily was clothed as became her station, and the boys doffed their buckskin suits for garments more in keeping with ideas of civilized life.

They remained in the place two or three days, when suddenly, to their great surprise, the boys met the queer old hunter, 'Hiel Splinter, in the streets.

"Wull, I'll be durned!" he said, in surprise. "Do I onct more set eyes onto these boys? Don't take me fur Long-Paw now, do ye? Wull, him and me's been friends fur a long time, an' I knows what he's suffered. Knowed him in Maine, knowed him when I see him in the woods. Done him some good turns in my day. Cheated Injuns sometimes by tryin' the throttlin' dodge onto 'em. Pretty good at that myself."

"Where are you going?" asked Will.

"Nowheres partickler. Reckon I'll strike out fur the mines."

That evening, as Baxter and the rest were sitting in a bar-room, looking at the curious customers that came in, one of the latter, a big, ruffianly fellow, carrying a pair of revolvers and a rifle, squirted tobacco-juice over Will's foot.

The lad instantly wiped it off on the seat of the man's trousers, and not very gently, either.

"Look ahere, young 'un," said the fellow, "did you do that a-purpose, or by accident? If ye done it by axident, all right, but ef yu done it a purpose, I'm goin' to warm ye."

"Did you spit on my foot by accident?"

"No, goldurn ye, I done it fur fun!"

"Then I wiped my foot on you for fun also."

"Ye did?" roared the man, drawing a revolver; "d'ye see that?"

"Yes."

"D'ye know what that kin do?"

"Yes, it can shoot, but it won't."

"'Cause why, I'd like to know?"

"For this reason."

Will raised his foot and sent the weapon flying over the bar and into a corner in a twinkling.

The man made a rush at Will, but seeing himself covered by the lad's revolver, he concluded to stop where he was.

"See here, pard," said 'Hiel, in a whisper, "d'ye know who that youngster is what you've been makin so free with?"

"No."

"Wull, I'll pour wisdom in yer ear, as Josephus has it. That 'ere lad is ther son o' Long-Paw, the Injun fighter, which the same is that there man a sittin' so quiet behind him."

"What?"

"Fack, pard, an' no lyin'; so ye'd jest better light outer yere as sudden's ye come in!"

"Jumpin' catamounts, ef I ain't come away without my band-box!" said the bully, suddenly. "Swan ter man, I'll hev ter go right arter it, this 'ere minit."

"Thort ye'd forgotten suthin," said 'Hiel, as the man disappeared. "It don't take more'n one mention o' Long-Paw's name ter scatter a hund'ed sech cattle ez him."

In a day or so after that, the whole party, including Splinter, set out for San Francisco, which they reached after an uneventful journey.

Will and Carl found their situations ready for them, and stepped into them at once, and it was not long before Harry's manly address and pleasant bearing stood him in good stead, by getting him employment in a bank.

CHAPTER XIV.

LONG-PAW IS AVENGED—CONCLUSION.

SAMUEL BAXTER, Esq., sat in the cozy library of his elegant mansion in Chicago, one morning, reading the paper before going to his business.

He was arrayed in a handsome dressing-gown, smoking-cap and embroidered slippers, and looked as if he really enjoyed life.

His wife was dead, and he had no children "to bother him," as he himself expressed it; was rich, had plenty of friends and did about as he liked.

Many a hard-working man envied Sam Baxter, and not a few intimated that he had not come by his money as honestly as he might have, although none could prove this.

He had had his breakfast and was now smoking his morning segar, an expensive one, by-the-way, for Sam would not have anything that did not cost considerable; and as the smoke-wreaths curled upward to the frescoed ceiling, he mused thus:

"Wonder if Will has got to 'Frisco yet? He's late; ought to have heard from him a week and more ago. If he *should* have been killed by the Indians what a comfort it would be. If I hadn't been sure that his father was dead I'd never have let him go; but if Will does live he'll never meet Paul; it isn't likely, supposing he was alive."

Just then the footman entered the library, bearing a letter on a silver salver.

"Letter for you, sir; come overland by pony express; particular, I believe."

Sam took the missive, and the servant departed.

"From San Francisco!" gasped the man, in a whisper. "He *has* reached there in safety, then. What's this? My God! I should know that hand! What strange feeling is this—I am choking!"

He swallowed a mouthful of water and then broke the seal.

Tearing open the letter in the most feverish excitement, the first words that met his eye seemed to strike him blind.

At last, in the most intense excitement, he managed to read the letter, not a long one by any means, scarcely half-a-dozen lines, including address and signature, and then, with a face as pale as death, slipped from his chair to the floor.

The letter read as follows:

"SAN FRANCISCO, October 1, 186—.

"*Brother.*—My son, Will, has arrived, as you will probably be glad to know. Thank you for sending him. Your tools are all dead, slain by my hand. May the vengeance of Heaven smite you!

PAUL."

The vengeance of Heaven!

It has smitten him!

An hour afterwards, when the footman entered to ascertain what delayed his master so long, he found the man upon the velvet carpet, dead!

His mouth was full of blood, which had stained the delicate fabric of his smoking-jacket, and bubbled over in a thick pool upon the carpet.

In his tightly-clenched hand was a crumpled letter, which no effort could remove without tearing it.

He was removed to his bed chamber and the coroner summoned.

The verdict was: "Death from apoplexy, induced by sudden excitement."

The verdict was false.

It should have been thus: "Stricken down by outraged justice; overtaken by the vengeance of Heaven!"

It was not long before Will heard the news.

The property came back to its rightful owner, from whom it had been unjustly seized, and Paul Baxter was once more a rich man.

The Chicago house was sold, and the business disposed of, for Will, who would inherit everything, and who was consulted about the matter, did not care to return to the place where he had never known much peace.

Long-Paw, the mysterious hunter, had been dissuaded from returning and taking his brother's life, by Will's most earnest entreaties, and when the poor man heard what effect his letter had had, he sighed and murmured softly:

"It was better so; his own conscience stabbed him more keenly than I could have done. He has expiated the wrongs he has done me—let him rest!"

From that hour until the day of his death Paul Baxter never uttered a word, good or bad, concerning his brother, and seemed to have utterly forgotten him.

Although the prospective heir to a large fortune, Will was unflagging in his efforts to become a thorough business man, and he attended as strictly to his work as if his future depended entirely upon his own exertions.

His father lived a very retired, strictly private life after that, and backwoodsmen wondered what had become of the famous hunter and whither he had disappeared so suddenly.

By degrees his skin became white, his hands lost their hirsute appearance and were as soft and delicate as a woman's; his hair and beard were kept carefully trimmed, and his form was never clothed in anything but the finest broadcloth.

He never saw any visitors and lived as secluded as any monk, scarcely ever venturing outside, and then only in a closed carriage.

When Will married Lily and went into business for himself, with Harry Morton as his partner, Carl Berger as his confidential clerk, and really as much of a partner as

Harry was, there was a grand wedding, and Paul Baxter was the most courtly-looking man in the whole assemblage.

He lived to see half-a-dozen grandchildren prattling about his knees, and when the oldest, Paul, he was called, was fifteen, he passed away, a fine, white-headed, noble-looking man, deeply mourned by all who knew him and who were acquainted with the sad passages in his eventful life.

There is little more to add. Carl married Annie Drayton, of course. Jack, in time, owned an immense sheep farm, and was the richest man for miles around; he and the other boys remained as firm friends as ever, though he saw but little of them; old Gabe passed away in a few years; 'Hiel Splinter got picked off by Indians, and now there is nobody but the three boys and their wives—Harry is still a bachelor, by-the-way, and promises to remain one—who knows the true history and adventures of LONG-PAW, THE MYSTERIOUS HUNTER.

[THE END.]

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